

Elderhood: A natural step in the aging process

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By Theresa A. Laver, MPA
For Pittsburgh Senior News

Our culture emphasizes youth. We are reminded at every turn. There are those significant birthdays that remind us of being "over the hill" and the media is constantly reminding us of staying forever young. The bombardment of advertising for clothing, the wrinkle creams, botox treatments and even medicines focus

on maintaining youthfulness.

But, is not aging a natural part of the life cycle? From the time we leave the womb we age. We grow from a baby to toddler to child to pre-teen, teenager to adulthood. Even within adulthood there are stages. There is no fountain of youth or magic pill that puts the aging process aside. It is a process we must live with every moment of our lives whether we like it or not. Yet, we are forced by our culture to



Create a keepsake with your own cookbook

By Kathleen Ganster for Pittsburgh Senior News

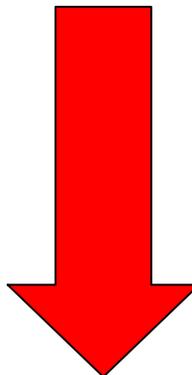
Is everyone always asking you for your brownie recipe? What about the "secret" of your potato salad? Maybe it's time to write your own cookbook. It would be a fabulous gift for family and friends or just a family keepsake for generations to come. Or maybe you want to help your church raise money and a cookbook has been suggested. Did you know that cookbooks sell second only to mystery novels?

Writing your own cookbook may be easier than you think. It can be as elaborate as many of the cookbooks you see lining the shelves at Borders or as simple as a collection of recipes in

Continued on page 10

Nofiii'S Notes: Charitable giving:
 First, do your homework ... "H... 14
Serendipity: Sleep, blessed sleep ... 16
 ACAA Connections 17-20
 'Snowy weather boxes' help homebound seniors ... 17
 ACAA assures flood victims help is still on hand "HH" ... 18
 Phone bank, postcards assess needs of senior flood victims. 19
 December Menu "H""H""HH""", 20 News from the EPA Aging initiative .. 20 Caregiving News "H""H""H"" 20
 The Snowbird Special: Tips for the winter trek to sunny Aorida21
 Volunteers Needed.....22
 Brentwood Bank goes mobile to-help seniorsHHH" 25
 MRP Report: AARP's Tax-Aide seeks recruits for 2005 tax season ... 26
 AARP News "H""HH""HH" 27 HEMAP helps those threatened by foreclosureHHH": 28
 What you should know about carbon monoxide "H"".....HHHHH": 29
 Focus on Your Health: Stay healthy during the holidays ...30
 Pittsburgh History: Boggs e Buhl Department Store, once a North Side Institution ""H""HHHHH" 32

Scroll to next page.





Create a keepsake with your own cookbook

Continued from page 1

a three-ring binder. (A gentleman I know used three-ring binders so that new recipes could be added every year!)

Where to start

Theme - Even before the recipe-collecting step, decide your theme. This can tie in very closely to your recipes - if you want to create a family cookbook, there's your theme. Same with a community group or church cookbook. Rita Venturino, local cooking instructor and future cookbook author, wants to write an Italian cookbook based on her heritage. Rita said, "I want to write a cookbook to share family, old-world and contemporary Italian recipes with cooks that are truly interested in Italian cooking."

The recipes - Obviously, you need recipes and accurate recipes at that. As a food writer, I often see recipes that just don't work! No matter if you are putting together a family cookbook or church collection, each recipe should be tested. If you don't have the time or resources to test recipes in a community or collaborative book, clearly state that in the beginning of the book.

This can also be a problem for recipes that have been handed down from generation to generation or those from cooks like my mother. "Oh, I just threw some things in," my mother often says. There goes the recipe!

In my cookbook research, I have read that the average cookbook contains 150 recipes and is 350 pages long. Keep in mind that is the average. Again, looking at the cookbooks in the local bookstores, you can see the sizes range greatly.

Rita has a jump on recipe collecting. Because she teaches cooking classes out of her Richland Township home, she has the recipes from her classes, already numbering more than 100. "I have a list where they are divided by category," she said.

The format of the book - Decide how you want to arrange your recipes. You might want to organize according to course, i.e. appetizers, beverages, salads, main dishes and desserts, or maybe you want to organize according to regions of a country or area. Once again, the recipes that you have collected will help determine this. If you have all main dishes, you may want to organize

according to the main ingredient instead of trying to find recipes to fit the other courses of a meal.

Also decide if you want to use photos or drawings. A lot will depend on how much money you want to put into the cookbook, how many copies you are making and your other resources. If you are self-publishing, you probably want to stick with illustrations or drawings.

In addition to being a fabulous cook, Rita also happens to be a photographer. Her own photos adorn her website and if all goes according to plan, will be in her cookbook as well. "I love taking photos of my dishes. My son laughs at me because one day he called and I was catching the sun rays on one of my creations to take the best possible photo," she said.

The format of the recipes - It is hard to rank the most important part of a cookbook, but the format of the recipes would probably be the most important to me. There is nothing more frustrating for a cook - of any level - than recipes that are hard to follow or leave out an ingredient.

The recipes need to be in a clear, simple format. If you are working with a committee, make sure everyone is with the same format. Inconsistent recipes are going to turn readers and buyers away. This sounds almost too simple, but make sure you type the recipes us

ing a clear, easy-to-read font.

I pause here to say a friend of mine put together a collection of family recipes and copied the recipes sent to her by family members. She did this as she wanted to preserve the recipes in everyone's own handwriting. This was a wonderful and unique idea. Like everything else in the world; there are no hard and fast rules for a cookbook. She then placed the copies in decorated three-ring binders. It was a great keepsake.

As far as the format, list the ingredients in order of use. Spell out the measurements. Write out teaspoon, tablespoon, cups, etc. Many cooks don't know the abbreviations between teaspoons and tablespoons. Mistaking the two could spell disaster.

Clearly state what you do with the ingredients. Cream the butter, melt the butter, slice the butter? Spell it out.

It always helps to list pan sizes, ingredient sizes (what size egg) and any other tips that assist the cooks. I know I keep repeating myself, but useless recipes make for a useless cookbook.

Set a deadline - This is vital for community cookbooks but it is also good to set a goal if working on your own cookbook. If not, you may find the cookbook project dragging on and on. Rita said, "As far as a deadline,

I would say 18 to 24 months." If you are hoping for a holiday gift cookbook, there's your deadline. PSN

Freelance writer Kathleen Ganster is a frequent contributor to Pittsburgh Senior

News and has written the cookbook French Cooking: Cooking Aboard the Lewis R. French. If you have questions about cookbook writing, you may contact her at ganster@connecttime.net.

Brandied Pumpkin Soup

From French Cooking: Cooking Aboard the Lewis R. French

Serves 6-8

This soup has a warm, rich taste and would be perfect for the first course at a holiday dinner.

1/2 cup butter
2-3 onions, chopped
2 (15 oz.) cans plain pumpkin
8 cups chicken broth
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon nutmeg
1 1/2 cups milk
1/3 cup brandy
salt and pepper to taste croutons

Heat butter in soup pot and saute onion until tender and transparent.

Stir in pumpkin, broth, ginger and nutmeg. Blend well and bring to a boil. Reduce heat.

About 1/2 hour before serving, add brandy and milk, and heat through. Do not allow to boil. Serve with croutons.

